

The one before the pilot

by Tommy2527

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Summary: This is my take on what was happening before we were all introduced to the wonderful world of friends. No copyright infringement intended. Hope you all like it. Please read and review.

1. Guess who?

****_Guess Who?_****

"Hey Chandler, Who's Miss Bong?"

Joey had just returned from his audition and was carrying some of the mail that he had redirected to his new apartment. He had found the TV guide and found an amusing name on the mailing address,

Ms. Bong, 90 Bedford St, Apt 19, NY 10014.

The apartment was a typical bachelor's house. It wasn't filthy, but it sure was Untidy, with lots of 'guy' stuff around- Magazines with women in their lingerie (and some with even less) strewn across the couch, old action figures and mechanix trucks stuffed into drawers, posters of their favorite comedy scenes from movies adorning the walls. They had an old, round table that you'd find in a 70s coffee shop that they barely ever ate at. All their meals were either on the couch or by the kitchen counter-especially Pizza nights. The fridge was full of beer, sodas and cheese. The cupboards were lined with breakfast cereals.

Joey wondered if it was someone playing a prank on Chandler and also wondered why he had not thought of it. He had grown quite close to Chandler over the past few months. Having grown up in a house full of sisters, it was nice to have a male roommate. Although the TV guide who disagree on the gender.

"Ahh, Miss Bong! She used to live here before you. We had JOINT custody of that subscription" Chandler replied in a tone which had

come to be known as chandleresque.

"So, this apartment had Bing Bong living in it?"

"Yes, that's the British cousin of Ping Pong"

Joey rolled his eyes at Chandler's antics and responded, "Well, where do you want me to keep it?"

"Just hide it somewhere so that it does not get stolen. I have feeling that Mr. Heckles is stealing it from the apartment.

"Really?"

"Yes, He must get quite lonely downstairs and I have seen him snooping around our and Monica's place. He should be sent to Arkham."

"What's Ark ham?"

"Batman, Arkham Asylum?"

"Ohh, I thought it was kind of a new deli meat"

It was Chandler's turn to roll his eyes at Joey's simple mindedness. He was happy to see his roomie back home but he appeared a little anxious. Chandler really wanted to tell Joey something.

"So Joe, I have some bad news for you."

"What?" Joey replied while planted himself onto the comfort of their sofa. He hid the TV guide under one of the cushions and turned on the TV.

"I am not going to be able to watch Baywatch tonight"

"What? Why? Are you moving out? Can I have your room?"

"I have a date" Chandler replied nonchalantly but with a small smile on his face.

>"YOU? A date? Really?" Joey responded with a hint of sarcasm. This was the first time Joey had heard Chandler mention that he had a date. He did not know how to react but after living with Chandler it seems that sarcasm was the way to go.
"Yes, why is it so hard to believe?"

"No, nothing, well who has a date on a Monday night? Also you are willing to go on a date and miss the premiere of the new Baywatch season?"

"Well it's actually a double date"

"That's better" The world finally made sense to Joey. He was still the stud of the apartment.

"With who?"

"You remember Kip? His FiancÃ© and her maid of honor"

Chandler could sense the jealousy all over Joey's face. Even though Joey had never met Kip, whenever Chandler would mention him Joey would start acting like a small child and ask Chandler who was better, him or Kip.

"So, This Kip guy is getting married?"

"Yeah, after the failed experiment between Monica and Kip, he moved out and started dating this beautiful girl named Tina"

"So how did you get dragged into the double date?"

"Well, their wedding is in two months and I supposed to be one of the groomsmen and they wanted to introduce me to the Maid of Honor. Maybe they were hoping that we would get together and reduce the seating by two"

"That's smart"

"So did you catch the girl's name and more importantly where are you going?"

"Yeah, Janice Hosenstein or something and Sorrentino's"

"Oh well good luck also get me leftovers. Please order the meatball marinara"

"Yeah, I am gonna need it. She is supposedly very pretty. I hope she likes the Chan Chan Man!"

"If only there was a way to find out how one looked before meeting them" Chandler bemoaned.

"I feel that kind of takes away the mystery of meeting someone new. Also looks are not that important, it's what's underneath that matters"

"Wow Joey, that's seriously a nice thought"

"Did you believe that? That's cool, it will be a great pick up line and by underneath I mean G-string"

Chandler shook his head and walked into his room to get ready. However he soon returned outside with a thought.

"I almost forgot, Phoebe had called, she wanted to meet us at 10 at the coffee shop downstairs."

"Did she say why?"

"No not really, and I have been hoping to go there myself. Have been avoiding it since Chris sold it and Monica banned me."

"Ok great, I will join you there after my audition"

"You have a late night audition?"

>"Yeah it's for some really hot and steamy movie with a great director"<p>

"Oh great, good luck"

With that Chandler returned back to his room. Chandler was quite excited to meet Janice but then as is the case with everything to do with Chandler, it's always Anticlimactic.

2. Serendipity at Serendipity

****_Serendipity at serendipity_****

"Carol, thank you for coming and meeting me"

A rather sleep deprived Ross had begged a rather annoyed Carol to meet him for drinks at their special place.

"Ross, the only reason I came here is because you are constantly trying to make me feel guilty for what I did. I know what I have done, I don't want you to remind me non-stop"

"Do you think it's easy for me to adjust to this? I have been in love with you for 7 years now! You were my college girlfriend! How could you just stop loving me?"

"I can't do anything about it! I just don't feel that I am attracted to men, I like women and I really hope that you can understand that"

"Yeahâ€|Noâ€|"

This was probably the twentieth fight they had since Carol told him about Susan. Ross was devastated since then and was constantly begging for attention from Carol.

Carol Continued "Do you have any idea of how difficult it is for me to reveal my orientation to the general public? It's the 90's, I will be fired from my job and evicted from the apartment, please try to understand me Ross, I am doing my best to cope with a bad situation. If you really love me then I hope you make my life a little better by letting me go."

"Yeah I understand, I am sorryâ€|."

"Plus now you can go and date women who truly like men. You are a great catch and I am sure some girl out there will be very happy for you"

"I really don't know who I will date! I just want to be married. I will miss the familiarity and comfort you get when you are in a long term relationship"

"Ohh Ross, enough of the melodrama, why don't we get a couple of drinks and just hang out? I can then come over and pick up the rest of my stuff"

Ross exhaled loudly and said "ok"

"Anyway Ross, why don't you start dating? I am sure if you start dating, you will stop thinking about me."

"Maybe you are right"

"What about her?"

Carol was pointing at a woman across the bar, she was a beautiful woman and Ross was shocked to see who it was.

It was Rachel.

It was Rachel... Rachel Karen Green of Lincoln High. Ross was surprised and taken a little aback by who it was. All those feelings he had for her once, the feeling of longing, desire and an irresistible attraction-feelings that he thought he had stowed away to the back of his mind and had turned benign and ultimately vanished with his long and steady relationship with Carol-came rushing back like a tidal wave sweeping over him. It literally was a tsunami of emotions. Coupled with his vulnerable and fragile state post breaking up with Carol, those feelings doubly affected him.

If it was even possible, Rachel looked even more gorgeous than she was back in school. She was a young woman now and the entry into her 20s accentuated her already impressive visage and other bodily features. Ross was lost for words, a small part of him told him that it was fate. Then it dawned on him that she was engaged. So there was no point in approaching her.

Yet, he composed himself first. He decides to go for it and talk to his high school crush. If Carol no longer cared about their commitment, there was no point in being miserable. He also hoped that Carol would feel a little jealous about him hitting on another woman.

"Rachel? Rachel Greene?"

"Yes?"

"Hi, I am Ross" Ross Gellar

Ross noticed that Rachel did not immediately recognize that who he was.

"I am Monica's older brother"

"Ohh, Ross! Of course! Sorry, I thought you were someone else"

"How are you? How is Monica?"

"Oh, Monica is great! She is working as a sous chef at Iridium cafe right now, she mentioned that she met you a few days back at Chris' Bar" Ross Replied with a smile.

"Oh yes, she was there with this goateed guy who kept talking about balls"

"Anyway, I heard you are getting married, congratulations!"

"Yes, thank you very much, He is a very successful doctor"

"Huh, that's funny, I am a doctor too"

"Really?" Ross could see Rachel's eyes immediately show more interest

in him.

"So what kind of doctor are you? Neurosurgeon? Cardiologist?"

"No, I am actually am PhD in Paleontology"

"Ohh, what's that?"

"Dinosaurs"

"Ohhh.. so not really a doctor" Rachel replied sarcastically.

Ross was hurt a little by that but still looked past it as it was Rachel who was having a conversation with him. This was the first time they had talked as adults. This was exhilarating for Ross.

"Anyway, what about you? Are you married?"

This question brought Ross back down to earth. Only Monica and the gang knew about his situation. But he wanted to tell Rachel everything.

"Well, it's a little complicated. I am separated"

"Oh, really? Why?"

"She and I had different interests, to be honest, we shared one common interest that drove a wedge between us"

"Hmmmâ€¦ I hope that does not happen to me! I just want the comfort of spending my life with all the things I need"

Ross decided to change the topic by asking about her fiancÃ©.

"So are you waiting Barry?"

"Yes, he is running late, he was supposed to pick up my maid of honor Mindy and meet me here"

"Oh ok, so if don't mind it if I hang around till he shows up?"

"Umm..sure"

They ordered a couple of drinks and continued with some more small talk just filling in the gaps since the last time they had seen each other. It was going really well for Ross, he had almost forgotten about Carol when Barry and Mindy showed up.

Barry and Mindy both appeared to be in a disheveled state as if they had haphazardly put on their clothes. Barry gave some excuse about his tardiness and Rachel ignored it with disdain and hugged Mindy.

Ross was a little surprised to see how Barry looked, he expected an Adonis but Barry was pretty average looking. Maybe Rachel did not care about the looks, probably only someone who would take care of her needs. Ross wondered as to why she let that happen. She was beautiful and smart and should have been building a career for

herself not settling down for a crap weasel. He also suspected that Barry and Mindy were having an affair but he let that thought pass.

Ross soon realized that it was time for him to get back to Carol, maybe he could get Rachel's Number and talk to her. Ross gestured to Rachel that he was leaving when she turned to him and said

"It was really nice to meet you Ross"

"You too, Rachel. Can I be honest about something?"

"Sure"

"I may be totally out of line here but that Guy?" Ross pointed to Barry who was now involved in a deep conversation with Mindy.

"I am sorry, what does that mean?" Rachel asked slightly surprised.

"I mean you dated the most popular guys in school, you were the head cheerleader and the homecoming queen, and you have the talent to be whatever you want. A guy should know what he has when he has you. You are Rachel Greene"

Ross stopped himself before he continued his tirade, as Rachel's face had fallen, it was as if a sudden deep sadness and realization had struck her.

"Aww Ross, that's sweet of you. Thanks. But sorry to break your bubble but I grew up, Barry gives me what I need. I am not the cheerleader anymore."

All Ross could do was smile, Rachel hugged him and left to talk to Barry and Mindy.

Ross walked away and thought to himself that if he could overcome his inhibitions about talking freely to Rachel, then he still had a good chance of getting back into the dating game.

Rachel walked away wondering if Barry felt like that about her the way she knew how Ross felt. Rachel knew that Ross had a huge crush on her but she never gave him a second thought. After their talk she realized that he worshipped her and that maybe in a different universe she would have given him a chance.

Ross returned to find that Carol was gone. Carol had left him a message saying that she was going to meet up with Susan. The euphoria he felt of talking to Rachel drained away when he realized that he was heading back to an empty apartment where his loneliness and sadness would haunt him throughout the night.

He however did not go home, Phoebe had asked him to meet up at the new Caf  under Monica's apartment at 10pm. He decided to head there early and have a nice hot cup of tea.

3. The Artist formerly known as Phoebe

The Artist Formerly known as Phoebe

Monica had just stepped out of the building when she was greeted by a crisp cool New York City breeze. The sky was clear and trees were a balderdash of color. She also smelled the aroma of freshly brewed coffee coming from the coffee shop. She had boycotted the Coffee Shop ever since the bar had closed. The type of people who visited the bar and the type of people who visited a coffee shop were very different. Monica did not feel that she would fit in well with those kind of people. She also preferred Beer over Coffee.

Without a second thought, Monica headed to Morton Street where Phoebe's grandma lived. Phoebe had moved in with her grandma around the same time Joey had moved in with Chandler. Monica had converted the bedroom into a guest room. She forced Chandler or Joey, Chandler mostly to stay over as a guest and even went to great lengths of having him sign a feedback form after his stay. Secretly she wished she had a roommate. She did not feel lonely though as almost everyone she knew used to hang out at her place during the evening.
>Monica was buzzed up by Phoebe and when she reached the third floor, she couldn't help but pinch her nose and gag. A horrible smell was emanating down the hall where Phoebe lived and Monica feared the worst.<p>

Phoebe was known to have been a little quirky and maybe Monica wondered if she was cooking some special stew. Monica's fears were alleviated when the smell was actually coming from Phoebe's Neighbors.

"Hey Phobes, what's that smell? Did someone die?" Monica asked with a look of disgust

"Hi Monica, Oh that, you get used to it." Phoebe replied with her usual cheerful disposition.

"I don't want to get used to it"

"It's my neighbor's Cat."

"I never knew that a Cat could smell that bad"

"Yeah, she is one Smelly Cat" Phoebe said that with a sparkle in her eyes.

"Okâ€| anyway, what's up? What's the big news?"

"You know that I love playing the guitar right? Well I got a gig."

"Oh my god, that's great congratulations!"

"Thank you! I already told the guys to meet us at the venue. I wanted to go along with you so that you know we could catch on things and see how life is treating us. Also, I need you to carry my good luck eggplant"

"You're what?"

"My good luck eggplant, I carry it wherever I undertake a new venture!"

Given Phoebe's quirkiness this was expected.

"So where is the venue?"

"It's at Central Park."

"Ohh that's cool. Is it near the lake? Or the carousel?"

"No not Central Park, Central Perk. You know, the coffee shop below your apartment."

Monica's expression soured and it was not due to the smell.

"Phoebe you know that I have avoided that place ever since Chris left, too many memories."

"I know that you hate the place but please come for me and support me. If they like the songs, I will get a daily gig there. They might even pay me money." Phoebe replied

"They are not paying you?" Monica retorted.

>"It's not about the Money! It is about expression, it's about sharing your music with the world!"<p>

"Why do you have a problem with the place?"

This was an interesting question. Coffee shops had become popular hangout spots for people in their 20's who wanted to relax and just chill. Relaxing in a coffee shop was against Monica's Rigidness and uptightness. She also worried about the cleanliness of the place.

"No, nothing, why spend money on Coffee when you can have it for free at my place"

"It's not only the Coffee Mon, it's the atmosphere and the acoustics."

"Fine, I will go with you. Only to support you. Remember that!"

Phoebe was ecstatic and jump and yelled "YAY! Let's head over soon, there are some really up and coming artist who are playing there tonight"

"Alright, let's leave as soon as possible, I cannot stand that smell anymore"

"Wait till you hear the song"

"What song?" Monica was bewildered.

"I wrote a song on the Smelly Cat"

Phoebe picked up her guitar and played some strings, and began singing.

Smelly cat, smelly cat, what are they feeding you?

>Smelly cat, smelly cat, it's not your fault.
They won't take you to the vet.

>You're obviously not their favorite pet.
It may not be a bed of roses.

>And you're no friend to those with noses.<p>

Smelly cat, smelly cat, what are they feeding you?

>Smelly cat, smelly cat, it's not your fault.<p>

Monica was speechless, this was the weirdest thing she had heard, and it clearly was an Original Phoebe. It was surprisingly catchy too.

"What do you think?" Phoebe asked with an intrigued look.

"It's great! But it's not the only song you are playing right?" Monica did not know what else to say. She wanted to be supportive of Phoebe.

No, here is the song list

Â• Your Love

Â• Smelly Cat

Â• Ode to Pubic Hair

Â• Crazy Underwear

All Monica could do was smile and hope to god that people don't pelt Phoebe with rocks.

"Ok, let's head out, don't forget to get the eggplant"

Phoebe and Monica left the apartment and made their way to the coffee shop. There was already someone playing music in the place. Formerly a bar, it had been closed down and renovated and refurbished. Gone was the pool table and dimly lit, dingy ambience and in its place was a spread out couch and a coffee table. The counter was larger and the clientele which earlier consisted of mid to late teens plopping themselves drunk, to working individuals in their 20s and 30s who discussed life or dates. Gone were the loud disco beats and were replaced by chatter of the patrons, the buzz of the pistons of the coffee machine, the plip plop of the hot coffee poured into mugs and the aroma of cakes, beagles, doughnuts and other snacks interspersed with the fresh coffee.

Monica and Phoebe nestled themselves into one of the couches to side of the caf   and started talking about how things were at work.

"There is this cute guy at work, he and I flirt regularly but I don't know why he hasn't made a move. He is the Sommelier at the restaurant. "

"He's a Somalian?" Phoebe was surprised to hear that Monica would go out with someone from Africa.

"Not Somalian, Sommelier. The Wine Guy"

"Oh nice!" it was all that Phoebe could say.

Sometime later Chandler walked in with a girl in a full leopard skin dress and red lipstick. The moment she walked in, she yelled "Oh my god! This is such a cute little place"

Chandler noticed Phoebe and Monica and walked towards them with Janice in tow.

"Hey guys, this is Janice, she just wanted to stop by for a nightcap and head home"

"Hi Janice, I am Monica and this is Phoebe"

"Janice is going away now" Chandler said with a tone of anxiety.

"Hahahaha" Janice laughed in a nasal tone which made everyone wish that they were deaf.

"Alright Chandler, I am heading out, Call me"

"Sure"

Janice left the Central Perk and it felt like everyone let out a sigh of relief.

"So Chandler, are you going to call her?"

"Are you crazy? This was one of the worst dates ever! But yeah, I will still call her. It's better to have a date on Saturday night rather than sit at home and watch Ready Set Cook."

Before Monica could ask any more questions Chandler changed the topic

"So Pheeb, why am I here?"

"Ooo.. I am performing tonight!"

"Wow, that's great!" Chandler then turned to Monica and said "its normal human songs right? Or Phoebe special?"

"You have no idea" was all Monica could say.

Soon Joey arrived from his audition wearing a handyman's outfit. He would not look out of place in a cheap porno where the handyman comes to fix the boiler.

"Hey Joe, So, how was the audition?" Chandler asked as he settled onto the couch.

"I did not get the main role, got a supporting role, I got stage fright" Joey replied with a frown.

"Oh ok, for a moment I thought you were in a Porno."

Joey acted like he did not hear what Chandler said which made Chandler think that he probably was in a Porno.

"Ohh, guys it's time for me perform! Wish me luck!"

Phoebe got up to set up her guitar when Ross finally appeared. He was crestfallen and exhaled loudly and said "hi"

"What happened to you?" Monica asked.

"Emotional hell with Carol, but hey I met Rachel Greene"

"Oh nice, she did not invite me to the wedding. It was a little hurtful but you outgrow your school friends. She is too spoilt for me" Replied Monica

Ross had nothing to add and just settled into the space vacated by Phoebe.

The lights soon dimmed and the spotlight fell on Phoebe who was all set with the guitar and the mic.

"Hi Central Perk, thank you for having me! These songs are all about the mysteries in life. I hope you enjoy them. I want to thank the most important people in my life for supporting me, My F.R.I.E.N.D.S."

End
file.